

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2170

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 543

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, KS

SUBJ: FKTU JOINS GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHRISTIAN SOCIAL
ACTIVISTS

1. FEDERATION OF KOREAN TRADE UNIONS (FKTU) AT JAN 18 SPECIAL MEETING THREATENED TO "MOBILIZE ITS FORCES TO CRUSH CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION MOVEMENT." ALSO DENOUNCED NEWLY-FORMED PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC LABOR AFFAIRS COUNCIL (PCLAC) FOR ATTACKING TRADE UNIONS AND AGITATING AMONG "INNOCENT LABORERS." FKTU PUT AD IN THE CHOSUN ILBO, PUBLICIZING ITS STRONGLY WORDED ATTACK.

2. PCLAC CONSISTING OF 19 SOCIAL ACTION ORGANIZATIONS WAS FOUNDED AT PROTESTANT INITIATIVE AT YEAR END BY GROUP OF CONCERNED CLERGY-MEN WHO ATTACKED FKTU FOR ITS FAILURE TO INTERVENE IN NUMBER OF CASES WHERE WORKERS HAD BEEN SERIOUSLY ABUSED. ORGANIZATION PUBLICLY CALLED FOR JOINT MEETING WITH FKTU LEADERS, GOVT OFFICIALS, AND EMPLOYERS FOR JAN 11. WHEN GOVT AND FKTU REFUSED PARTICIPATION, CHARGING THAT LABOR CAMPAIGN NOT PROPER BUSINESS OF CHURCHES, PCLAC ACCUSED FKTU OF WORKING WITH GOVT AND EMPLOYERS TO REPRESS WORKERS AND CALLED FOR ITS DISSOLUTION. AT SAME TIME PCLAC ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO STEP UP CHRISTIAN LABOR OFFENSIVE AGAINST ABUSIVE EMPLOYERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO HAD USED VIOLENCE AND TERROR AGAINST WORKERS. FKTU COUNTER-ATTACKED, CLAIMING IT
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WOULD NOT TOLERATE "OUTSIDE AGITATION" AMONG KOREAN WORKERS.

3. OFFICE OF LABOR AFFAIRS (OLA) DEPUTY DIRECTOR TOLD EMBOFF THAT WHILE NO DIRECT MEASURES ARE INTENDED AGAINST CHRISTIANS, ROKG WOULD NOT DEAL WITH THEM ON LABOR ISSUES, ONLY WITH FKTU. PRIME MINISTER ADDRESSING LABOR INSPECTORS ON JAN 14 STRESSED THAT CHRISTIAN LABOR AGITATION MUST BE KEPT OUT OF FACTORIES. SIMARLY PRIME MINISTER TOLD FKTU LEADERS AT SPECIAL MEETING THAT THEY HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR COUNTERING CHRISTIAN AGITATION AND REPORT-EDLY PROMISED FUNDS FOR SUCH FKTU ACTIVITIES.

4. PRESS HAS PUBLICIZED PCLAC AND FKTU PUBLIC SALVOS AGAINST EACH OTHER.

5. CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT SOURCES HAVE INFORMED EMBASSY THAT ROKG HAS ALSO STEPPED UP SURVEILLANCE AND HARASMENT OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION GROUPS. AMERICAN SILESIA FATHER, WHO RUNS CATHOLIC DON BOSCO YOUTH CENTER AND PLAYED ACTIVE ROLE IN ESTABLISHMENT OF PCLAC, TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE WAS INTERROGATED BY POLICE ABOUT PCLAC, SAID HE HAS BEEN THREATENED WITH DEPORTATION, WHILE YOUNG WORKERS WHO LIVE AT CENTER ARE BEING HARASSED, TO POINT WHERE HIS CHURCH SUPERIORS ARE NOW CONSIDERING TRANSFERRING PRIEST TO OTHER ACTIVITIES.

6. COMMENT: ROKG, WHILE STILL MOVING CAREFULLY, IS STEPPING UP ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION MOVEMENT. IN THE PROCESS IT IS BECOMING LESS SENSITIVE ABOUT HANDLING OF FOREIGN-ERS ENGAGED IN LABOR AGITATIONS. FKTU, ALONG WITH POLICE AGENCIES, IS NOW BEING MOBILIZED BY GOVT TO DEAL WITH THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION GROUPS. THE FKTU CHOSUN ILBO STATEMENT IS GENERALLY INTER-PRETED AS GOVT-INSPIRED AND AS A DECLARATION OF WAR ON CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTIVISTS.

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